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ABSTRACT

This personal report of classroom experiences at an urban commuter college relates the experiences of a teacher and a group of working-class students studying the book "Utopia," which is also the metaphor for the hoped-for learning experience. The book, illustrated by excerpts from student-submitted work, shows how pedagogical theory leads to unanticipated student demands for which the teacher is initially unprepared. It explains how, entering the classroom on the first day, students exile themselves in a kind of "Siberian syndrome," filling the last rows of seats first. When the teacher attempts to build a pedagogy based on shared power and democratic authority and to mediate resistance and cross-cultural boundaries, students are wary. The book describes the working out of the processes of negotiating the curriculum, shared authority, collaborative decision making, and cogovernance between instructor and students followed by the formation of a student after-class group, and rising student expectations. The final chapters of the book are a review of what worked and what did not. (Contains 350 references.) (CH)

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